East Lake interns win-win situation

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me sharper.

"There is a synergy there. We trade ideas and it makes me look at things differently as time passes." It's an enjoyment for me seeing them exposed to a different culture, teaching them, and seeing them go home and succeed."

The most recent success story was John Gubb of England, an intern in 1998 who recently was senior course manager at Royal Bedforshire in Bedford, England.

Course officials said what separated him from the other candidates for the position was that he had worked at a high-profile course in the States, Horr said.

"High visibility has something to do with attracting interns," said Kepple. "Bobby Jones was very popular in Great Britain and this is where he learned to play. It was known as the St. Andrews of America."

Ohio State University's (OSU) College of Agriculture has operated an international internship program since 1979 and a golf internship since 1988, sending American turfgrass students overseas and placing foreign students at golf courses in the United States. Program Coordinator Michael O'Keeffe, an Irishman who himself was an intern, works with foreign schools, screening and interviewing candidates, arranging their visas and placing them at American courses. So East Lake's courses merely have to pay the wages.

Working with students from OSU, Penn State and Texas A&M, he will send 16 students to train at golf courses abroad -- six or seven in Australia, seven in England, a few in Ireland and one at St. Andrews in Scotland.

"The demand from overseas is much greater," O'Keeffe said. "We have probably 60 students each year from Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. They are training all over the country."

East Lake first got involved in 1997 when Irishman Ronan Brannigan, son of a golf course architect, interned here.

In 1998, Englishmen Gubb and Tim Randall spent a year. Then last April Jon Crook, whose internship is serving as the Crook, explained his reasons for intern in England. "It's been a great experience," said Crook, "like how to manage a crew. It's very well-run, and there are a lot of people from different walks of life: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and from all over America. Back home they're all English, and there is no language barrier."

One barrier they will most likely face will be a lack of opportunity for assistant greenkeepers, he said. "At home," said Hickey, "you can't get a first assistant's job unless you have at least six or seven years experience. The [condition of your] greens really don't count for anything. Experience is everything... It's unusual to have a first assistant who is 25 or 26 years old back home."